

ON THE REVIEWERS' TABLE

THE WEAVERS. By Gilbert Parker. Harper & Bros., of New York. Through the Hel. Book and Stationery Company, of Richmond. Pp. 229. \$1.50.

Among the many books to be counted into those making up the output of the autumn, it is a relief to come upon so strong and thoughtful a piece of literary composition as "The Weavers." Known first in the world of letters through the virile quality of his Canadian stories, Sir Gilbert Parker added next to his reputation by choosing the Channel Islands as the setting for his novel. The scene of this last of his efforts is laid in England, Egypt and the Sudan; the romance and the realism of it centre in one man who absorbs the interest of all that is done and said throughout.

This man is David Claridge, the son of a Quakeress, Mercy Claridge, and Lord Eglinton, an English peer, who married Mercy under an assumed name, and, forsaking her after a few months of wedded life, leaves her to die in her father's home, when her son is born. The secret of David's parentage is known only to his grandfather, Luke Claridge, and an old ship's steward, Sooty, who has been on Lord Eglinton's ship when, as James Fetherden, he wedded Mercy Claridge.

Luke Claridge despises Lord Eglinton because he is an apostate from the Quaker faith. The fact that his daughter, Mercy, has married out of her own class and religion is a great grief to him. The additional fact that Lord Eglinton has chosen an English girl as his wife during his courtship and deserting his young wife so soon after marrying her, adds fuel to the flame of his wrath and scorn. So he buries his daughter with Mercy Claridge carved on her tombstone in the simple Quaker burying-ground, and calls her son David Claridge, because he becomes in affection more really a son than a grandson.

David knows nothing but that his father was named James Fetherden. In the meantime, Lord Eglinton has made a second marriage and has a second son, who, at his father's death, inherits his name and estates. Luke Claridge keeps his lips locked in scornful silence.

David is a Quaker and a Claridge, but he has inherited enough of his father's nature to want to know life through experience. The indulgence of such desires brings him under the censure and penance of his sect and aroused in his mind a conviction that his sphere of activity is outside of the community of Hamley in which he has lived.

An uncle of his, Luke Claridge's brother, had lived in the East and spent much time and effort in the betterment of Egyptian social and economic conditions. In an uprising of the natives against the Christians he loses his life, but sends a message to David by a trusted Arab friend, bidding him carry on the work to which a life has been consecrated.

David's nature responds to the appeal. He bids good-bye to home and friends and goes alone to a stupendous undertaking. In defense of a woman, and that woman an English girl, almost as soon as he reaches Egypt, he is intentionally taken a man's life. Although he is justified in his own eyes, his act casts a shadow over his life and sets him more surely apart to the doing of his task.

In the description of David's first meeting with the effendi, in his dealing with his enemies, in his disappointment through the treachery of those in whom he has trusted, in his lack of support from the English government, in his constancy and unshaken firmness, in his Cairo and Soudanese experiences, the book is strong, thrilling and passionate enough to be altogether remarkable.

The romance of the book, and its characterization, the delicate touches which reveal the beauty of soul in faith, the Quakeress; the subtle skill which gives the reader a sharp impression of Luke Claridge, Sooty, and Tim Lacey, the American, bring out to the full the ability of the author and his versatility in delineation. Every word, every action and every person mentioned has a part in the development of the story, in its dramatic incidents and its climax.

From first to last the consistency of the book is one of its strongest points. It does not moralize, its interest is enthralling, and yet it points a powerful warning against the engrossment of vanity and selfishness. Nothing that Gilbert Parker has yet written possesses more merit, or has reached a higher plane than "The Weavers." It is in direct contrast to many books of the day and gains much by comparison with them.

GALLANTRY. By James Branch Cabell. Harper & Bros., of New York, publishers. Pp. 321.

The title page of Mr. Cabell's new book informs his reader that "Gallantry" is "an eighteenth century ditz in ten comedies, with an afterpiece," this last being one of the attractive parts of a most truly artistic literary make-up.

As an author Mr. Cabell is as careful and painstaking as is Richard Mansfield as an actor. Mr. Mansfield's plays were not only perfectly acted, but they were perfectly staged, with strictest attention paid to the smallest details. The reader taking up "Gallantry" cannot fail to observe, apart from the fine merit of its composition, what harmony and continuity of thought and suggestion is evidenced in it from cover design, by color illustrations, the words of Howard Pyle, through epistle dedicatory and prologue, on through to "Love's Alumni" and the epilogue, which is the "bonne bouche" that the author bestows for a parting gift.

The same excellent taste which obtains in the matter of illuminated initial letters heading chapters, done by Mr. Cabell himself, in prefatory quotation, and the clever introduction of dramatic persons, has limited the number of book illustrations to four, the selective choice of the four rendering them extremely effective.

The period of the book covers the years between 1750 and 1755. The comedy is called "Smoking Hour" and is played at Stornaway Crag, England. The remaining comedy scenes are laid in France or England, and are linked together by chronological sequence, and by kinship of characterization and interest. Mr. Cabell says in his preface: "In, at times, an altered form, and without exception drastically abridged, some portions of this book have made an earlier appearance, more thanks to the hospitality of divers magazines. For the courtesy which makes possible another and more ample presentation of these several episodes, decorum now demands acknowledgement; and this their author hereby tenders both in gratitude and in salutary consciousness that his readers are enfranchised as concerns a rather larger area of emotion."

The book is dedicated "to the memory of Midshipman James R. Branch, killed at Annapolis, November 5th, 1906, as both in life and death an exponent of the true and highest meaning of the word gallantry."

The pertinent prologue is spoken by Lady Allonby, who figures in the book as a pleasure-loving, luxurious woman, a widow and very rich. She comes forward at the author's behest and ends her lines by saying:

"Yet scattered here and there, I some behold,
Who can discern the tinsel from the gold;
To these he writes; and if by them allowed,
'Tis their prerogative to rule the crowd.
For he more fears like a presuming man,
Their votes who cannot judge, than theirs who can."

"Love's Alumni" touches lightly in passing upon the good fortune and contentment of the different book reviewers taking chief part in Mr. Cabell's comedies and laying strong hold upon the reader's fancy thereby, so that one is pleased to say them good-bye while the sun of good fortune still makes their lives happy.

The author tersely defines the purpose of his work, and his estimate of it in the following verse of the epilogue, spoken thus by the Duke of Ormskirk:

"The author's obdurate, and bids me say
That—since the doling of our Georgian day
Smack less of Hippocrene than of
Boheea—
The tiny pictures of that tiny time
Aim little at the lofty and sublime,
Nor paint a pageant as a crime—
Grant that we flogged and were indolent,
And that our idols had but earthen feet,
And that we made of life a masquerade
And swore a deal more loudly than we prayed;
Grant none of us the man his Maker meant—
Our deeds the parodies of our intent,
In neither good nor ill pre-eminence
Grant none of us a Nero—none a martyr—
All merely so so, and de to narratur."

"Gallantry" will be put on the book market this week. It is by far the most important and the finest work that Mr. Cabell has yet done, its consistency, its thorough finish and its perfection in the way of reversion and atmosphere adding largely to the reputation he has already achieved as a descriptive writer of modern American life and medieval times and manners.

His present publication will award him the palm in the line of eighteenth century fiction, which he handles with perfect comprehension and with mastery of style and treatment.

THE TENTS OF WICKEDNESS. By Miriam Coles Harris. D. Appleton & Company, of New York, publishers. Pp. 474. \$1.50.

In the middle of the nineteenth century a novel entitled "Rutledge," and published anonymously, created a profound sensation, that being a period when melodrama prevailed and the "strong novel" had not come into vogue.

For quite awhile "Rutledge" was thought to be the work of a man rather than a woman. It was not considered possible that a woman could have produced anything so virile and so full of sarcasm against the fads and pretenses of fashionable American society.

For those who read and enjoyed the flavor of that earlier publication, and can judge by comparison, traces must present themselves that show a strong analogy between the expression of a youthful writer and the later and more mature authorship of ripened years.

It has become rather a popular thing to turn the searchlight of criticism upon the manners and morals of the idle rich New York set, and Miriam Coles Harris has followed the popular lead, as her title, "The Tents of Wickedness," would indicate. Her heroine is a young New York girl, the daughter of a very wealthy father, who having spent all of her early years in a French convent, is shocked and thrown back upon herself when, after her return home, she has her first glimpse into what is generally known as the "smart set" of New York society.

The girl's utter innocence and purity of nature saves her from injury. She endures much suffering, but finally marries a good man, and the man of her choice, Paul Fairfax.

The cleverness and sharp insight into human nature which formerly rendered the author of "Rutledge" unique obtains in the book under discussion, which has its brilliant points and is unfailingly interesting.

THREE WEEKS. By Ellner Glyn. Duffield & Company, of New York, publishers. Pp. 280. \$1.50.

All old landmarks and limitations in literature and society are swept away. Old rules of criticism cannot apply. What would have been impossible some years ago is not only allowable now, but is considered rather praiseworthy. The person who decides against it is called narrow and difficult and disqualified for passing an opinion that will hold.

All this by way of preliminary. "The Visits of Elizabeth" made Miss Glyn's reputation. It was decidedly risqué, but the majority considered that its cleverness atoned for its broadness. Certainly it was very decent indeed when compared with "Three Weeks," which is without doubt, beyond the pale, and belongs to the class of books that no one, who desires to cultivate correct tastes in literature would care to read.

PINAFORE PALACE. A book of rhymes for the nursery. Edited by Kate Douglas Wiggin and Dora Archibald, Smith. The McClure Company, of New York, publishers. Pp. 239. \$1.50.

This volume is a collection of the best nursery rhymes, nonsense verses,

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The editors have been able to draw upon sources inaccessible to the general reader. In this way they have been able to recover many masterpieces of nursery lore as well as to bring together many old favorites. Mothers with children to entertain at home will give this book a place on the nursery bookshelf. It is incomparable in its way, and deserves the heartiest commendation and appreciation.

THE EMANCIPATION OF MISS SUNDANNA. By Margaret Mannix Funk & Wagnalls Co., of New York, publishers. Pp. 72. 40 cents.

This story of how a spinster got rid of her apparently hopeless spinsterhood and achieved happiness and matrimony at one and the same time was originally published serially in the Circle Magazine, where it attracted favorable attention because it embodied an original idea, worked out in a very entertaining manner. The book belongs to the bourgeois series, and is daintily bound and illustrated.

CAPTAIN JUNE. By Alice Hegan Rice. The Century Co., of New York, publishers. Pp. 130.

The name of Alice Hegan Rice is dear to the heart of childhood, and "Captain June" is a story that is told in her best and most delightful manner.

It is the story of a little American boy, whose father is in the navy, and who goes out to Japan with his mother from California. When he reaches Japan, his mother is called away by the illness of his father and "Captain June" is left in the care of his faithful little Japanese nurse.

The many strange and interesting things that happened to him and the many pleasant experiences he goes through with are interwoven in a narrative that boys especially will have great pleasure in reading.

THE COZY LION. By Frances Hodgson Burnett. The Century Co., of New York, publishers. Pp. 103. 60 cents.

The third in a trio of stories told by the Fairy Queen—how she reformed the lion and introduced him to society, and all about the good times the "cozy lion" and the youngsters of the village had together.

Mrs. Burnett's fertile imagination and clever pen make him a real and altogether fascinating and jolly character. The twenty pages in full color by Harrison Cady make an altogether charming book and one which appeals to children of all ages.

FAMOUS STORIES EVERY CHILD SHOULD KNOW. Edited by Hamilton Wright Mable, assisted by Kate Stephens. Decorated by Blanche Osterlag. Doubleday, Page & Company, of New York, publishers. Pp. 300. 90 cents.

The author's introduction to this book says: "Only stories which are sound in the views of life they present ought to be within the reach of children; these stories ought to be well constructed and well written; they ought to be largely objection stories; they ought not to be in respect to morbid or abnormal in any way. A great deal of fiction especially written for children ought to be left severely alone. It is as unwise to feed the minds of children exclusively on books specially prepared for their particular age as to shape the talk at breakfast or dinner specially for their stage of development."

The stories collected in this volume have been selected from many sources, because, in the judgment of the editor, they are sound pieces of writing, wholesome in tone, varied in interest and style. Dickens, Ruskin, Hawthorne, Baron De La Motte Fouque, the Bible, Cowper, Hale, Onida, John Brown, M. D. and William Austin are authors represented.

MORNING. James Whitcomb Riley. The Bobbs-Merrill Company, of Indianapolis, publishers. Pp. 125.

The genial pen of James Whitcomb Riley turns thought into verse in a way that is much liked by his countrymen and women in all sections of the United States. The little poems of this volume, sentimental, patriotic, dialect, childish and those in lighter vein, all reflect the happiest vein of the "Hoosier poet" who must have had the gift of "Morning" in his heart when, in his "Out of Reach," he wrote:

"O by their dear remembered smiles,
And outstretched hands and welcoming speech,
They wait for us, thousands of miles
This side of 'out-of-reach.'"

AFIELD WITH THE SEASONS. By John Buchanan. The Century Co., of New York, publishers. Pp. 120. 75 cents.

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USHERS. Pp. 174. \$1.25.

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